

WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors,
and workers in the District of Columbia*

Friday, June 30, 2006

ENSURING A SAFE 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION MEANS KNOWING THE LAW ON FIREWORKS IN DC

July 4th is traditionally a time for parades, backyard barbecues and the spectacular fireworks display on the National Mall. Unfortunately, the Independence Day holiday is also a time when serious injuries associated with illegal fireworks are all too common. Nationwide, nearly 10,000 people a year are treated in hospital emergency rooms for fireworks-related injuries; more than 40 percent of the victims are ages 14 and younger. So again this year, the MPDC is joining with other public safety organizations in advising the public to know the law on fireworks in DC. District law prohibits all firecrackers, as well as any fireworks that explode (including cherry bombs, salutes, Roman candles, floral shells, and artillery shells) and any fireworks that launch after being lit (such as bottle rockets, parachutes, buzz-bombs, pinwheels, helicopters, and jumping jacks). Fireworks that have a side fuse or that contain mercury, arsenic or other dangerous materials are also prohibited. Among the fireworks that are allowed in the District are small sparklers, fountains, torches and other novelty items.

MPDC RENEWS EFFORTS TO SOLVE INFAMOUS "FREEWAY PHANTOM" MURDERS

It was a series of brutal crimes that shocked and terrified the DC metropolitan area. Between April 1971 and September 1972, six young African-American females, ages 10 to 18, were abducted from their neighborhoods in DC and strangled to death – their bodies dumped near busy roads or highways in both DC and Prince George's County. The news media soon dubbed the killer the "Freeway Phantom." Now, 35 years later, the MPDC is renewing its efforts to solicit assistance from the public in solving these heinous crimes. This past week, members of the MPDC's Major Case Unit began distributing flyers on the Freeway Phantom case in Southeast DC, hoping to jog memories and to encourage anyone with information about the unsolved murders to come forward. Because there were six victims, the Department is offering a reward of up to \$150,000 for information leading to an arrest and conviction in the case – the standard \$25,000 reward in homicide cases, times six. The first victim, 13-year-old Carol Spinks, was abducted in late April 1971; her body was discovered days later along I-295 near the Suitland Parkway. Four more victims tied to the Freeway Phantom were abducted and murdered during 1971. The sixth victim, 17-year-old Diane Williams, was killed in early September 1972, her body also discovered along I-295 near the Prince George's County line.

① For detailed information on fireworks laws in DC, as well as useful links to fireworks safety tips, click on:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1237,q,547662,mpdcNav_GID,1550,mpdcNav,_.asp

① As a routine public safety precaution, the MPDC will activate its network of 19 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras for the July 4th celebration in DC. Details at:
<http://app.mpdc.dc.gov/newsroom/newsroom.asp?sid=467000>

① The MPDC receives a large number of calls during the July 4th holiday. Here are some tips: for gunshots or fireworks that create an immediate public safety hazard, call 9-1-1 with a precise location and description of the incident; for other matters that do not pose an immediate public safety threat, call 3-1-1. Details at:
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1237,q,547641,mpdcNav_GID,1554.asp

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① For more information on the investigation, including a downloadable copy of the reward flyer, go to:
<http://app.mpdc.dc.gov/newsroom/newsroom.asp?sid=466000>

① The MPDC currently offers a reward of up to \$25,000 for information leading to an arrest and conviction in any unsolved homicide that occurred in DC, regardless of when the killing occurred.

“BUYER BEWARE” WHEN DEALING WITH CONTRACTORS FOLLOWING RECENT DELUGE

Days of torrential rains left many DC residents with wet basements, leaky roofs, problems with gutters or other home-repair issues. The MPDC is joining with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) in reminding residents to be savvy consumers when dealing with home improvement contractors. First off, DCRA recommends that consumers should verify that a home improvement contractor has a valid Basic Business License before agreeing to any work or signing any contracts. “A Basic Business License lets residents know that a home improvement contractor has met the criteria to do business in the District. DCRA also has the power to take action if work is not performed to a reasonable standard,” said agency Director Patrick Canavan. Even though repairs may be needed urgently, residents should take the time to get estimates – in writing – from any home improvement contractor. Consumers should refuse to sign any contract that does not have all blank spaces filled in, and should insist on a copy of the contract once it is signed. Be especially wary of any contractors who solicit door-to-door, who insist that the whole job be paid for up front, or who demand only cash payments.

AGGRESSIVE SPEEDING RATE REMAINS LOW IN MAY

Aggressive speeding in DC’s photo radar enforcement zones continued at a near-record low rate during May 2006. Only about 2.3 percent of the more than 2.5 million vehicles monitored by photo radar during May were found to be speeding aggressively – that is, traveling above the threshold speed established for the program. That compares with an aggressive speeding rate of almost 31 percent when the program began nearly five years ago, and represents the third lowest aggressive speeding rate in the program’s history. The record low rate – 2.0 percent – occurred in February 2006. During May, just over 2.5 million vehicles passed through enforcement zones monitored by the District’s stationary and mobile photo radar cameras, but fewer than 60,000 were found to be speeding aggressively. In May 2004, by contrast, about half as many vehicles were monitored by photo radar (1.3 million), but two thousand more potential violators (62,271) were caught on camera that month. The latest data show that average speeds of all vehicles on DC roadways monitored by photo radar continue to be substantially lower today than they were in the summer of 2001, when the photo radar program began. For example, on streets with a 30-mph speed limit, the average speed of all vehicles monitored by photo radar was actually under the speed limit (27.7 mph) in May 2006 – down from 37.6 mph in July 2001. Since August 2001, more than 1.9 million photo radar Notices of Infraction have been mailed and about 1.44 million have been paid, resulting in fines in excess of nearly \$109 million.

NEWS & NOTES

Chief Ramsey on News Channel 8, WTOP. Chief Ramsey discusses public safety issues with the public during two media appearances in the upcoming week. On Wednesday, July 5, from 4-5 pm, the Chief appears on News Channel 8’s “News Talk” program, hosted by Bruce DePuyt. Then on Thursday, July 6, from 10-11 am, the Chief has his regular monthly “Ask the Chief” appearance on Washington Post Radio (1500-AM and 107.7-FM). Note that “Ask the Chief” is no longer heard on the main WTOP station (103.5-FM).

Summer Curfew Reminder. Young people and their parents are reminded that the “summer curfew” hours in DC – 12:01 to 6 am, seven nights a week – are in effect from July 1 through August 31. The MPDC is emphasizing curfew enforcement this summer as a way to help combat juvenile crime. Details at <http://app.mpdcc.gov/newsroom/newsroom.asp?sid=463000>.

- ① Review these and other hints, which are helpful any time of the year, at:

http://dcra.dc.gov/dkra/cwp/view,a,11,q,637129,dcrNav_GID,1695,asp

- ① Consumers can verify Basic Business License information by calling (202) 442-4400 or online at:

<http://rply.dkra.dc.gov>

- ① The MPDC offers a number of consumer protection tips, including information on con games, swindles and flood protection, at:

http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1237,q,543154,mpdcNav_GID,1547,asp

- ① Get a statistical summary of DC’s photo radar program at:

http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1240,q,548110,mpdcNav_GID,1552,mpdcNav,31886|.asp

- ① Although there have been increases at some intersections in recent months, the incidence of red-light running has declined by more than 63 percent overall at intersections equipped with safety cameras. Details at:

http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1240,q,547886,mpdcNav_GID,1552,mpdcNav,|.asp

DATA BOX

Homicides	as of 6/30/06
◆ 2006: 82	
◆ 2005: 87	
◆ % Change: -5.7%	
◆ Closure Rate: 47.6% (39 closures)	
Adult Arrests	week end. 6/24/06
◆ Total: 899	
◆ Weapons: 35	
◆ Robbery: 10	
◆ Unauthorized Use of Vehicle: 16	
◆ Prostitution/Sex Offenses: 45	
◆ Narcotics: 148	
Juvenile Activity	week end. 6/24/06
◆ Total Arrests: 59	
◆ Robbery: 4	
◆ Curfew Violations: 176	
Firearm Recoveries	as of 6/28/06
◆ June: 163	
◆ 2006 Total: 1,158	
Traffic Fatalities	as of 6/30/06
◆ 2006: 23	
◆ 2005: 20	
◆ % Change: +15.0%	

Information, ideas, or comments about this service? Send an e-mail to **KEVIN MORISON**, MPDC’s Director of Corporate Communications, at kevin.morison@dc.gov. Would you like to have this information e-mailed to you? Just go to our Website and register with **Crimereports.com**.

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